

*****Hope for the Future*****

by

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An AD&D 2nd Edition Dark Sun scenario for character levels 4th-7th. This scenario is a 1992 entry to the Invitational Game Master Contest.

Dungeon Master Background

Life on the burning world of Athas is rugged at best, and can deal an unmerciful death at its worst. Once or twice every generation a special female child is born to normal humans throughout the Tyr region. Such a child, if she lives to maturity, shall become a psionist of great power and responsibility called the Villich. The birth of a villich is quite rare, perhaps one in 30,000 girls is born a villich child, and their mortality rate in the destructive desert wilderness is very high. Because they are destined to change the face of cruel Athas, the villich are sought out by others of their kind and taken to a secret convent hidden beyond the prying eyes of the malevolent sorcerer-kings. This adventure deals with one of the villich who could very well be the most powerful of her generation.

Surrounded by huge mudflats on the northwestern edge of the Sea of Silt lies the magnificent city of Draja. Draja is ruled by a sorcerer-king who calls himself "The Mighty and Omnipotent Tectuktitlay, Father of Life and Master of the Two Moon." Tectuktitlay is actually a king of lesser power when compared to the others of the Tyr basin, and all within the city well know that he considers himself of godlike stature. Whatever he may think of himself, Tectuktitlay has always taken a great interest in Draja's psionics academy for the children of nobles and others who show gifted potential. It was to this **Academy of Psionics** that young Hope D'maka was enrolled on her 9th birthday.

Astounded by her incredible psionic ability after only one month, a templar named Polteck took a great interest in the young girl, hoping to use her as a stepping stone in his ambitious thirst for power. Ignorant of the villich, Polteck never suspected that one of his own instructors was one of this special group.

When this instructor tried to spirit young Hope away, Polteck intervened and mortally wounded the abductor. She did however manage to escape with Hope to the house of the child's noble parents. With her dying breath, the woman told the nobles of the powers that Hope holds. The woman also said the templars of Draja will never rest until they find her. The woman's last words were of a place where the child should be taken, and that place is the **Mountain of Echoes**. However, Templar Polteck does not give up easily and will pursue the child to the mountain range.

Starting the Adventure

The player characters begin this scenario as either slaves of the noble house of D'maka (the wealthy parents of Hope), or as freemen mercenaries hired by said noble house. In either case, the players characters are instructed to take Hope to this mysterious Mountain of Echoes located in a small ridge of peaks 60 miles west of Draja. If the characters are slaves of the noble house, completing this mission will result in their freedom (Such circumstances are subject to DM's judgment. Something may have to be done to prevent the slaves from just running. ie. a dwarven focus, a spell put on the players characters by a wizard NPC, etc.). Mercenaries who take on this mission will be paid 100gp each and may be subject to certain oaths or spells as listed for the slaves to insure their sincerity.

Once the above information is decided, the adventurers begin on the D'maka estate one hour after the death of the villichi woman. Sunset is quickly approaching as Lord D'maka addresses the players:

The blazing brilliance of the orange sun of Athas begins its descent from a cloudless sky, calling an end to another day on this scorched desert world. You stand now in the presence on Lord D'maka, a high ranking noble whose ancestors have served as the generals to the sorcerer-king Tectuktitlay's armies for several centuries. A grave look of concern crosses the noble's sun-beaten brow, and his glance shifts to a young girl with a very fair complexion at his side. Turning his gaze back to your assembled group, Lord D'maka sighs and tells you why you've been summoned.

"Late this afternoon a strange woman approached with my youngest daughter Hope," the mans gaze once again turns to the petite girl at his side, "and told us that she was one of the Villichi. What is a 'villichi' you ask? They are a strange group of women, born to normal humans across the Tyr basin, who possess astonishing psionic powers. These villichi roam widely throughout the world in search of these rare female children of their own kind, taking them to an unknown convent to be with others like them.

Gesturing at what is undoubtedly a lifeless female form shrouded in a tattered and blood-soaked blanket, Lord D'maka continues, "This woman was one of the teachers at Draj's Academy of Psionics, and is conceivably one of the villichi. She was mortally wounded by the tem-plar Polteck, but was able to return the child here before dying.

Her final words were, '...this child is one of the villichi.....take her to Mountain of Echoes....he will not rest until she is his....', and then she perished. I wish you to take her to this Mountain of Echoes, take her before the templars find her here and slay all of us in the name of Tectuktitlay."

Lord D'maka will supply the party with a map of their destination, along with four days' worth of food and water. If the player characters are slaves in the service of the noble, he will give them papers allowing them to pass as freemen until they return, along with their choice of whatever weapon they wish in either bone or obsidian. He will give them two weeks to complete this task, and if they have not returned by then, said measures (DM's choice as stated above) will take effect leading to the characters eventual demise. D'maka is a powerful man and is not to be taken lightly.

The noble is an uncharitable type of man and makes no effort to hide it. He has been put in a very difficult position, one that could at the very least cause him to lose face with other nobles and templars, and at the worse cause him to lose everything he has, including the lives of his family. The only choice left to him is to make it look as if this mysterious woman, though critically injured, escaped with his daughter to some unknown destination. Though he may love his daughter, he loves his station is life a little more, thus his reason for engaging the character's help.

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The Villichi

Villichi are females born to normal humans. No one can predict when or where such children will be born, it just happens. In areas where they are known, they are shunned by normal humans, though it is considered a bad omen to turn out a villichi child into the brutal wilderness. When they come of age they usually move to a convent of their kind, located somewhere in the Ringing Mountains. Because of Draj's distance from these mountains, many people who live near the Sea of Silt know nothing of them. Villichi are all very strong psionics, resembling normal females albeit longer of limb and face. Most appear tall and thin, draping themselves in cloaks or robes because they are especially susceptible to the burning sun of Athas.

Away from their convent they may wear variations of leather armor that is cooler under the sun, but never wear or use any items constructed of metal. All villichi have an extremely good Dexterity (ranging between 15-22), and gain a +1 to all attacks using any non-metal weapon available to psionics. However, their preferred method of attack is their formidable psionics.

The power of a villichi's psionics varies with her Hit Die; they do not use the psionist's powers table to determine their powers. Their Hit Die range between 3 and 12, and their powerful nature give them all a natural 10% magic resistance.

The villichi community is a small and powerful one, puissant enough that even sorcerer-kings hesitate to interfere with them. Although the Mighty Tectuktitlay may know of the existence of the villichi, he is the farthest of the kings from the Ringing Mountains, and many of his templars and subordinates know nothing of them. Tectuktitlay has even been debating on whether to have one dissected should he ever encounter one.

Hope D'maka

Although she is very confused at the present, the youthful Hope is a spirited young woman who is just beginning to show signs of her stalwart heritage. As with all villichi, she is quite attractive having just reached puberty (another reason her powers have just come into being).

Hope will willingly except her father's judgment, for she does not wish any harm to come to him or the rest of her family. Deep down inside she is beginning to feel the sense of what she truly is, and will accompany the characters to the Mountain of Echoes.

Hope will immediately become fond of one of the characters, with a female character being the best choice. Otherwise any character who shows her exceptional kindness will have an extra shadow watching over them. If any characters who show her compassion are in mortal danger, Hope will use her untrained psionic power to aid them.

Hope D'maka: (AC: 8, MV: 10, HD: 3, 13 hpts, THAC0: 20 (fights as a 0 level human), #AT: 0, SA: psionic powers, MR: 10%, ML: 12 (7 if her powers fail her), SZ: S (4'), AL: LN, Str: 7, Int: 17, Wis: 16, Dex: 16, Con: 15, Chr: 17)

Because of her young age and lack of training, Hope has a -2 penalty to all her psionic rolls. This number will improve by 1 for every 3 successful power checks. Hope possesses the following psionic powers (**Note: Although she is only a 3 HD Villichi, Hope possesses additional powers due to her uncanny ability at a young age):

PSPs: 70

Psychokinesis: Sciences: telekinesis, project force; Devotions: ballistic attack, inertial barrier.

Telepathy: Sciences: mindlink, psionic blast; Devotions: contact, id insinuation, invincible foes, mind blank, thought shield.

Hope is a gentle, caring young girl, but she is visibly naive about the real world outside her secure estate in Draj. Each time there is any sort of battle there will be a 10% chance that she will flee in terror. Other than that, she will be more or less able to take care of herself as long as there are other people near her. Anyone knowing of the villichis will quickly realize that the resilience of this young girl marks her as one of these distinctive breed of women.

Hope dresses in a chestnut colored cloak, with matching boots and pants. She has long flowing red hair that swirls when as she walks, and her face is sheathed in a hood attached to the cloak and shields her creamy skin from the ruthless sun. Unknown to the party, Hope carries 20sp that her father gave her and told her to tell no one. If genuinely befriended she will tell someone about the money, and the obsidian dagger that she has concealed within her cloak.

Draj and Surrounding Areas

At the DM discretion, players may know some information about Draj and the area the encircles it. Draj rests at the center of a fairly large verdant belt (mudflat area with grass and other vegetation) that borders a small silt basin to the east, and a days journey from the enormous Sea of Silt to the south.

Beyond Draj's verdant belt are miles of stony barrens, with distant mountains to the west that are the parties eventual destination. Draj's closest neighbor is the city of Raam ruled by the sorcerer-queen Abalach-Re, and mercenary or escaped slave characters may have origins in this city. There is only one major trade road linking the two cities, and players may resolve to use this road until they must break north to reach the Mountain of Echoes. Whether the adventurers travel the trade road, or trek boldly through the barrens is their choice.

Encounter Key

All scenario encounters can happen independent of whatever route the players travel, however each encounter will occur in the order it is listed. Characters can travel a distance equal to their movement points in miles per day, but must move at the speed of the slowest party member to avoid separation. All thri-kreens and muls can move additional distances due to their unique racial abilities.

Encounter #1: The Bog Monster

After business is taken care of at the D'maka estate, Hope's family will say their goodbyes and send the group on their way to the Mountain of Echoes that night.

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Smuggling young Hope D'maka out of a calm moonlit Draj was exceedingly perilous, ducking in and out of unlit alleyways to avoid half-giant patrols and diabolical templars. After what seems like days of inching your way through the city streets, the fading moonlight reveals the verdant belt of grasses and shrubs that surrounds wondrous Draj, telling you that city is finally behind you.

The fiery sun, tinted a scalding scarlet by the distant Sea of Silt, leisurely begins its rise into the cloudless morning sky as the edge of the verdant belt looms directly ahead. The ground beneath your feet begins to turn into soft mud, telling you that a small source of precious water may be nearby. Searching the horizon for the priceless liquid, you spy a meager puddle of muddy water a mere dozen feet away.

This small pool of water is home to a savage bog wader, a sadistic creature who preys on unsuspecting creatures who come to drink here. The creature's principal method of capturing prey is to create a wallow (a pit trap in the mud) using its own saliva to make it appear as normal terrain. Once an unprepared victim falls in, the merciless beast attacks. The pool is a jagged 8' in diameter, and about 5' down at its deepest. No matter which way they approach, at least one luckless character will encounter one of several wallows that surround the stagnant water.

Bog Wader: (AC: 4, MV: 3/Sw 15, HD: 4+3, 25 hpts, THAC0: 15, #AT: 5, Dmg: 1-3/1-3/1-3/1-3/1-4, SA: impale, SZ: 6', ML: 11, AL: CE, XP: 420)

Bog waders are small, misshapen creatures that could be mistaken for a dwarf at a distance. A closer look reveals thousands of wrinkles overlapping gray skin and thin, yellow and black bones that poke through its soft skin on all sides. A pair of dorsal ridges run down the creature's back, and they have small flat heads with no nose but a breathing hole. They have bent legs designed for leaping, and webbed feet and hands that end in sharp three-fingered claws. The wader has a row of tiny razor sharp teeth used for ripping and tearing an opponent.

If caught in melee combat, the bog wader relies on its four claw attacks and fierce bite, but its more deadly attack centers around its self-made trap. Using a mixture of saliva and mud the beast causes the concoction to float to the top of its wallow, creating a primitive pit trap. Once the trap is sprung, the bog wader hurls itself upon the victim, attempting to impale it on the bones which grow through its skin. If this attack is successful it does 2d4 damage, locking the victim to the monster.

Once impaled, the target must make a bend bars to free himself, or they are pinned beneath the creature at the bottom of its watery grave, where they will eventually drown. In addition, each successful attack by the beast thereafter means the fiend was able to pin another of the victim's appendages, requiring another bend bars to free. If the bog wader gains the bottom, it will use its feet to dig in and hold its prey there until

drowned.

As long as a character is held under the mud, they cannot breathe normally. Any character who was surprised in the round he went under does not get a good gulp of air and thus can only hold his breath for 1/3 his Constitution score. Otherwise, he can hold his breath for 1/2 his Constitution score in rounds. After this time a character must make a saving throw vs his Constitution every round with a cumulative -2 penalty each round. Once the save is failed the victim must breath or drown.

This bog wader was very successful in the past, and there are several items lining the bottom of its wallows. At the DM's discretion, put the creature's booty in 1 wallow, or spread it out among several (causing the characters to get very dirty, something they may wish to think about). The bog wader's collective treasure consists of: 17gp, 46sp, an obsidian hand ax, and a kank breastplate that improves the wearer's AC by 3. All coinage found possess the mint of the city of Raam.

****Note:** If the characters started the adventure as slaves, the presence of money found here could be important in Encounter #2 when they have the opportunity to purchase items from the dune traders. Therefore, the DM may encourage them to get a little dirty in hopes of obtaining some coinage.

Encounter #2: The Dune Traders

(The DM may wish to read the new Dark Sun Accessory *Dune Trader* to use this encounter to its fullest)

Once the characters are several miles from their encounter with the bog wader, read the following in the daylight hours only:

Shielding yourself from the scalding sun seems an impossible task as you pray for the soothing cover of darkness, though the cloak of nightfall harbors unimaginable horrors. With only a few hours left until sundown, your astute eyesight discerns a large dust cloud over the next dune. The billowing cloud continues to expand as the distant cries of conflict reaches your ears.

Over the next dune is the tail end of an exhausting battle between two of Athas' major trading houses; the diabolic House Tsalaxa, and their arch rivals House Wavir. These two trading houses are currently at odds in several cities of the Tyr region, competing unbridled for the sale of grain throughout the basin.

Furiously insulted after losing a costly deal at the market of Raam, the House Tsalaxa sent out a raiding party to destroy a Wavir caravan headed for Draji. House Wavir, known for their savvy and ruthlessness, was expecting the attack and are dealing the killing stroke to the raiding party as the characters spot the distant dustcloud. Not one of the Tsalaxa raiders has escaped.

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There are several options open to the player characters at this point. They can turn away and avoid the encounter and since they have not been seen at this time by the Wavir scouts this is a simple task. Or they could crest the rise and observe the final moments of the battle between the two houses. Or third, they could boldly approach the victorious caravan and introduce themselves. Of the three choices, the second or the third would be in their best interests. If the characters peer over the dune to investigate the dust cloud, read them the following:

The considerable dust cloud that encompassed the horizon a moment ago slowly begins to once again rest on the desert floor as you cautiously steal a glance in it's direction. Squinting against the fierce glare of the sun and sand you spy what appears to be a trader's caravan. A mere 70 or so yards away, you see 5 mekillot drawn wagons along with numerous crodlu riders swarming around them like bees around a precious flower.

Littering the desert floor are two score of corpses, the obvious losers of the contest. Though the caravan guards and inix mounted bowmen have begun to scout the area, they have yet to spot you.

***NOTE: DM be prepared with a complete description of mekillot, crodlu, and inix for player characters who have not encountered them before.

At this point the player characters still have a chance to escape detection by the caravan, but it must be done within 1 round or the crodlu scouts will spot the party and call for their immediate surrender. If they decide to approach the caravan in an attempt to purchase items or render aid to the wounded, they will again be approached and asked to willingly surrender. If they foolishly attack anyone from here on, they will be cut down like a runaway kank by the caravan guards.

Once they are escorted to the battle sight, a youthful man accompanied by a dozen mul guards will come forward to speak with the player characters. This man is Targo Wavir, grandson to the patriarch of the Wavir Trading House. Targo is a seasoned fighter now learning the art of trading from his father and grandfather in preparation for the day when he might lead the Wavir House. Targo is a human male in his 30s with a constant look of seriousness about him, and is very intelligent. It was Targo who planned and executed the defeat of the Tsalaxa raiders, and the current morale in his caravan is exceedingly high (17).

Targo will question the party showing little or no emotion. He is a little hostile, for as far as he knows the party are Tsalaxa raiders. While the party is being questioned, Targo's caravan psionicist will attempt to discover the truth of the parties words for they do not wish to slay anyone innocent.

Once the truth of the matter is known, Targo will ask for the assistance of anyone who knows of healing or is a cleric, for their cleric was slain in the attack. If the PCs befriend the Wavir caravan by aiding them, they have made a very powerful ally that may be used in future adventures. Helpful player characters may camp for the evening with the caravan, sharing their water and food with their new friends. Parties with a helpful cleric will find the Wavir to be very generous.

A night spent with the Wavir caravan will be a celebration over their hated

enemies, for the Wavir are cruel to those who oppose them and cordial to those who assist them. Anything traded for will be heavily negotiated for.

Targo Wavir: (AC: 4 (kank field plate), MV: 12, F10/T7, 78 hpts, THACO: 11, #AT: 2/1, Dmg: 1d8+6 (steel long sword+18(00) Str), Wild Talent: combat mind(PSP: 30, PS Int-4; Cost-5+4/round), AL: LN, STR:18(00), INT:16, WIS:15, DEX:10, CON:14, CHA:15)

Abalow Gleshaw-Caravan Psionicist: (AC: 6(Dex + robes), MV: 12, Pst12, 46 hpts, THACO: 15, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d4-1 by obsidian dagger, AL: LN, STR:15, INT:15, WIS:16, DEX:19, CON:12, CHA:9)

Psionic Summary: PSPs 143

Defense Modes-intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, thought shield, tower of iron will

Clairsentience-Sciences: clairaudience Devotions: all-around vision, danger sense

Psychometabolism-Sciences: metamorphosis Devotions: body weaponry, cause decay, chameleon power, flesh armor

Psychoportation-Sciences: teleport Devotions: astral projection, dimensional door, time shift, time/space anchor

Telepathy-Sciences: ejection, mindlink, psionic blast Devotions: conceal thoughts, contact, ego whip, esp, id insinuation, identity penetration, psychic crush

40 Caravan Guards: (AC: 4, MV: 12, F5, 31 hpts, THACO: 16, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d10 by halberd or 1d6 by spear, AL: N, ML: 14 (current 17, 40% of these guards are humans, the rest are muls)

The following is a small list of some of the things that the traders will have for sale to the PCs. The prices listed are full price, player characters can get up to 50% off this depending on how they treat the traders, while haggling will get them another 10-30% off.

soft boots: 1cp
cloak: 8 bits
tunic: 8 bits
belt pouch-small: 7 bits
block & tackle: 5cp
waterskin: 8 bits
battle ax-obsidian: 25sp
impaler: 4cp
quarterstaff: 2 bits
long sword-bone: 45sp
short sword-bone: 3sp
wrist razor-obsidian: 2sp
leather armor: 5sp
chitin ring mail: 30gp

breeches: 2cp
saddles: 1 bit
backpack: 2cp
belt pouch-large: 1cp
hemp rope-50': 1cp
water/gallon: 4cp
dagger-bone: 6sp
guisarme-bone: 15sp
spear: 9 bits
long sword-obsidian: 75sp
warhammer-bone: 6sp
sickle-bone: 18 bits
padded armor: 4sp
shield-bone: 3gp

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studded leather-bone: 6gp

kank breast plate: 20gp

Encounter #3: The Deadly Oasis

One day away from the Mountain of Echoes the player characters will stumble upon a lone oasis in the desert. Upon closer scrutiny there appears to be a large pool of sparkling water amidst sparse grass and shrubs. There are no signs of life as the party approaches.

This pool of water possesses an ancient enchantment cast by a mad defiler ages ago who was excessively paranoid about outsiders drinking from what he considered his oasis. Anyone who physically touches the pool of water will immediately be pulled underneath its surface (no save) and will be magically held there until they are either rescued or drown (rules for drowning can be found in Encounter #1).

Victims of the pool will be held in the very center of the pool which is 15' in diameter and a clear 30' deep, truly a great source of water in these stony barrens. The water is highly magical, and will detect as such. But if it is removed from the pool safely (see below), then it will become normal water.

Because of the raw power behind the casting of this spell (perhaps done by a current sorcerer-king before ascending his throne), there is no way of permanently dispelling the effects of this trap. Trapped victims cannot use magic or psionics to escape the pool, they must wait for someone to rescue them. There are several ways to rescue someone before they drown:

1) A dispel magic cast on the pool will negate the enchantment for 1 round for every level of the caster. During this time water can be removed from the pool, or anyone trapped can swim to freedom.

2) An item extended through the water to the victim, so he or she may grab it, may be used to pull them out as long as the one who is holding the item doesn't touch the water physically. Trouble is they must reach the center of the pool safely without becoming trapped themselves.

3) If the victim can somehow hold their breath for 2 turns, they will become immune to the harmful effects of the pool for 1 hour. They can retrieve booty from the pool's bottom, remove the drinking water safely, and exit the water freely.

This deadly pool has become the bane of many creatures and travelers over the years, and there is considerable treasure beneath its surface. For anyone with a weaponsmith or weapon improvisation proficiency, there is an abundance of bones from creatures large and small to create any type of bone weapon. Much of the cloth or cloth-type armor that was in the pool is too rotted to use, however there is a breast plate constructed from the hide of Athasian Earth Drake that will subtract 7 from the wearer's armor class. In addition, the armor grants a +3 bonus vs all earth-based magic..aka earth elemental attacks, clerical magic, etc.. .

Also, the pool contains: 370sp, 180gp, 20 gems w/50gp each, an ornate scepter worth 500gp, a composite bow +2, a golden scimitar of speed, and a horn of

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blasting. DM should be very tough on the player characters in their attempts to retrieve these items, and do not let them spend a great amount of time here (like several days). Reward creative thinking here with a few coins or gems, but major magic items can only be found when the pool is thoroughly searched.

Encounter #4: Kindness of Slavers

Sometime between Encounter's #3 & #5, the party will encounter a group of slavers. This group is returning to Raam after a very unsuccessful search for escaped slaves, or weak free men who will make a good catch for the forceful slavers. If the PCs have a scout out in front of the party, they will notice a group traveling toward them with a small inix driven cart and can avoid it if they wish. If no scout is posted, then the two groups will encounter each other at the same time. If the PC's flee once they have been spotted, the slavers will consider them escaped slaves and pursue. If the two groups close to within 50 yards, read the following:

The amber colored dust cloud you've been following for the last few minutes slowly makes its way over the stony barrens in your general direction. As it approaches, you can see a dozen fully armed men escorting an inix pulling a caged cart across the barren wastes. The men from this meager caravan hail you as they come closer, and as they do you notice that the caged cart they pull contains what appears to be a half a dozen or more slaves.

These slavers are lead by a human defiler named Gravoss who has a contract to deliver slaves to the templars of Raam. His recent expedition into the desert has yielded only eight escaped slaves, and of the eight only 4 are in good health. Because of this Gravoss has ordered his men to approach the PCs to see if he can do any business with them, or capture them to meet his quota for the templars. Gravoss' slavers have orders to wait for his signal before attacking, but be ready for any treachery .

If the close to within speaking distance (and if the PCs don't attack them outright), Gravoss offers a gracious hello to any of the surviving characters that step forward. If the PCs that are slaves are still dressed shabby and carry no visible weapons (or if the PCs are disguising some members as slaves), Gravoss will offer to buy them (offering 10sp for a healthy slave) from any character posing as a noble or freeman.

If the PCs stumble over any of the defiler's questions, he will ask for proof that they aren't slaves or else he will attack. If the party can prove to the defiler that they are not slaves, he will ask for information regarding slave whereabouts stating that he is low on his current quota and would be willing to share his booty if they could supply him with any information. If the party is hurting from previous encounters, the defiler will attack the weakened group in hopes of getting more slaves.

DM should play this encounter to disgust PCs and test their roleplaying knowledge of Dark Sun. In the end, the party can attack the slavers if they are not too injured, or make some excuse to leave the defiler to his hunting. Make sure to tell the PCs that the slaves look at them with long faces and pleading eyes, hoping that they will liberate them. Unless the PCs give Gravoss a good reason NOT to attack, he will leave them in peace and resume his trip back to Raam.

Gravoss the Wicked: (AC: 8, MV: 12, Dfl 6, 23 hpts, THAC0: 19, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d4 -1 by bone dagger, ML: 13, AL: NE, STR 11, INT 16, WIS 14, DEX 16, CON 12, CHR 9, Wild Talent: Control Flames, PSPs 42)

SPELLS

1st: Chill Touch, Sleep, Burning Hands, Charm Person

2nd: Flaming Sphere, Mirror Image

3rd: Slow, Lightning Bolt

Gravoss is a cruel and vicious man whose use of defiler magic is slowly destroying his body, causing his skin to shrivel and his hair to fall out. Despite this he is a powerful opponent and the men he employs have a warped sense of respect for him. In addition to the bone dagger, Gravoss carries the following: 52sp, 44 bits, pouch with spell components, a Ring of Free Action, and a Wand of Paralyzation w/18 charges which he has been using to capture most of his slaves with.

Thar-Mul Overseer: (AC: 5, MV: 12, F5, 36 hpts, THAC0: 16, #AT: 3/2, Dmg: 2d4 by iron lucern hammer, ML: 13, AL: CE, STR 20 (+3 hit/+8 damage), INT 15, WIS 13, DEX 17, CON 16, CHR 11, Wild Talent: Know Direction, PSPs 22)

Once a slave in the arena, Thar was sold to the defiler Gravoss who in turn gave the mul his freedom as long as he would further the wizard's needs. A savage and merciless fighter who will slay an opponent for the fun of it, Thar enjoys his role as overseer of Gravoss' and looks forward to the capturing of slaves. Other than his iron hammer and carru leather armor, Thar has little else in personal belongings.

11 Human Slavers: (AC: 8 padded leather, MV: 12, F2, 13 hpts ea., THACO: 19, #AT: 1/1, Dmg: 1d6 by bone short sword (-1 to hit/-1 damage), ML: 11, AL: LE)

These men were all bought out of slavery by Gravoss and trained by Thar. They will fight with zeal unless Thar or Gravoss fall, at which point they will require a morale check or have to flee.

If the slaves are liberated, they will take whatever water the PCs will allow them and flee into the desert. They do nothing that will benefit the party and only wish to be free to try and seek out some local slave tribe.

Encounter #5: Mountain Terrian

After some 50 miles of stony barrens (assuming the party traveled in a relatively straight line) the group will encounter a ring of rocky badlands surrounding a cluster of mountains which includes the Mountain of Echoes. This range of mountains has no official name, going by a different title depending on which city you live in. Citizens of Draj call them 'Badlands Peaks,' the people of Raam refer to them as 'Yaldulio's Range' (named after an ancient hero who died there), while the various slave tribes who

secrete themselves within have named them 'Freedom Crests.'

The party will have to make several terrain checks to travel to the Mountain of Echoes, which is at the center of the range. The PCs will have to roll 1d6 six times, once for every 1/2 mile traveled. If there is a 1 or 2 result, roll for the terrain encounter listed below:

Terrain Encounters

1: **Dust Storm:** High wind gusts that blast throughout the mountains, the dust storm causes great damage to the eyes and respiratory system. Characters who do not cover their eyes will be struck blind on a 1 in 6, and partially blind if the roll is 2 or 3. It will take 2d4 turns for the blindness to subside. Those who do not cover their mouth with a cloth or rag will suffer 1d3 hit points of damage per turn they are exposed to the blowing dust. The dust storm will last 2d6 turns then diminish.

2: **Light Earthquake:** Perceived as a shivering or vibrating force, a light earthquake is more of a nuisance than a hazard. However, if characters are performing some type of task of importance, then the light earthquake will make this task even more difficult. The simplest of tasks may require a Dexterity check, with possible penalties. The light quake will last for 2d6 rounds and then cease.

3: **Rockfall:** Similar to an avalanche, a rockslide occurs in valleys between mountains. All characters must make a saving throw vs breath weapon or they will be unable to avoid the falling rock. Those who fail have a chance to be injured in the fall. The attack of the rockslide is that of a 7HD monster, and gets four 'attacks' at characters who fail their saves. PCs get only their Dexterity adjustment for their armor class, and each attack causes 1d8 damage if successful. If a victim take more than 20 points of damage, then they are considered buried and have a chance to suffocate to death. Rules for suffocation are the same as those for Encounter #1.

4: **Explosive Eruption:** The mountains in this area are very unstable (hence the sparse population), and the peaks as well as the terrain below sometimes suffer from eruptions of gas and ash. When these explosions happen they are deadly to all life, fortunately the eruption gives those in the area warning to the fury that is about to be released. PCs will see small puffs of ash and gas issuing from small cracks in the ground, slow at first, then building to its ultimate climax. The party will have 1-2 rounds to get as far away as possible before the explosion occurs. When this blast of superheated gas and ash erupts, all those within range will be in the effect of a cloudkill spell at 10th level. The area will be filled with the deadly gas for 2d10 turns.

Encounter #6: Affects of Ambition

When the party is within 1/4 mile of the Mountain of Echoes, they will be ambushed by the templar Polteck and his posse from Draj. Without warning these forces will spring from the rocks and attempt to slay the party, then capture the girl and return her to Draj for study. After the battle at the Academy

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of Psionics, Polteck went to Hope's father and demanded that he hand over the child. When Lord D'maka told him that his daughter was not here, the templar slew him without thought. Threatening the rest of the family with a similar fate, they told them where the PCs and Hope were heading. Using his magic and the tracking expertise of the renegade halfling Zal, Polteck's posse beat the PCs to the mountains and set up this ambush.

Polteck's forces are far from faithful to him and his sorcerer-king, and may not fight to the death. Polteck, however, is a coward at heart and will flee the battle if he is damaged or most of his forces are destroyed. With no warrior experience, Polteck has no specific ambush plan and just hopes to surprise the party and defeat them with the force of numbers. However, tactics such as these tend to underestimate the strength of the opponent.

Polteck-Templar of Tectuktitlay: (AC: 8, MV: 12, T8, 35 hpts, THAC0: 16, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d6+3 (by steel short sword +2 and Str 16), ML: 14, AL: NE, Str 16, Int 15, Wis 20, Dex 13, Con 13, Cha 15)

Spells

1st: Command, Cure Light Wounds, Cause Light Wound, Pass w/o Trace, Fear, Sanctuary*

2nd: Aid* x2, Charm Person, Hold Person, Resist Fire*, Withdraw

3rd: Call Lightning, Conjure Lesser Elemental**, Meld into Stone

4th: Cause Serious Wounds, Poison, Produce Fire, Stick to Snakes

* indicates spell casts prior to ambush

** indicates spell from new Dragon Kings hardbound.

In addition to the magical steel short sword +2, Polteck also carries 2 potions of healing, and a ring of protection +2.

Zal-Renegade Halfling: (AC: 8, MV: 9, HD 5, 25 hpts, THAC0: 15, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d6-1 by obsidian short sword, SA: psionics, SZ: 3', ML: 13, AL: CE)

Psionics Summary

PSP: 130 Score: 15 Level: 6

Psychokinesis-Sciences: detonate, disintegrate; Devotions: control flames, levitation, molecular agitation, animate shadow.

Psychometabolism-Sciences: Shadow form; Devotions: flesh armor, body weapon, heightened senses, double pain.

Telepathy-Sciences: tower of iron will, probe, mind trust, ego whip, id insinuation, mind blank, mind barrier, contact.

His origins shrouded in mystery, Zal (as he calls himself) is a mercenary for hire who does quite a bit of work for Polteck, and Tectuktitlay himself. When this cruel halfling takes a job, he makes sure that he finishes it. If seriously injured, Zal will retreat into the mountains, possibly attacking the PCs after Encounter #6. If he is not slain then, the PCs will have an eternal nemesis in the halfling and he will not rest until they are dead.

6 Mul Slave Fighters: (AC: 8, MV: 9, F4, 23 hpts, THAC0: 17, #AT: 1, Dmg: 1d8-1 by obsidian long sword, ML: 10, AL: N)

These fighter slaves have been offered their freedom if they help Polteck return the girl to Draj. They have orders not to harm the child and to show no mercy to the

dangerous traitors. They will stay with the battle unless Polteck flees or is slain, otherwise they will flee free into the wilderness.

Encounter #7: The Mountain of Echoes

Following their map after the encounter with Polteck, the party will approach the base of the Mountain of Echoes. Known to all by this name, very few people actually know why it is called such. The term 'echoes' refers to the way that the stone of this particular mountain multiplies psionic power points. Anyone who comes in contact with this vermilion colored rock will have their PSPs increased by 30%. Pieces of this rock will confer this increase in ability for up to 5 miles away from the mountain, but farther than that and the rock is useless.

Because of this area's affect on psionics, the villichi have a small tribe of followers here to find other villichi so far from the Ringing Mountains. Psionist who come into contact with the red rock will feel a tingling of power flow through them. When the party nears their destination, relay the following:

Consulting the map provided by Lord D'maka, you realize that the Mountain of Echoes towers before you. The rock of this butte is a strange reddish color, a stark contrast to the others surrounding its peak. As you try to discern your next move, a tall woman dressed in a flowing adobe cloak appears from behind an outcropping of rock.

Brandishing two curved bone scimitars, she boldly strides forward and states, "Do not even think of drawing your weapons on myself or you'll be cut down by a dozen of my comrades hidden above. Now that I have your attention, where is Challa???"

Here is the PCs chance to tell their story from the beginning. If the party stumbles on any parts Hope will interject for them, giving them praise where they deserve it, and jeers whenever she had felt threatened along the way. Challa was the woman who was slain by Polteck, and the news of her death visibly shocks the villichi. Once the story is told, she will lower her weapons and thank the party for their help. If she is foolishly attacked, the 15 villichi hidden above will use their powers to render the party unconscious (no save). They will wake up an hour later with all of their supplies, except items of metal, gone with the fleeing villichi.

Because of their conflict with the templar, the villichi will not feel safe here anymore and will move their base to another hidden location in the western Tyr region. For their troubles the party is given 100gp to divide among themselves, and the wise advise not to return to Draj for awhile (since Lord D'maka is dead, any threats that he made toward the party are considered gone).

This villichi, named Garina, will tell the PCs of her race and of the powers of the crimson stone. She will tell them that if they ever need help or have information for them to return to this place and someone will answer their psionic summons. Hope will bid

the party goodbye, and disappear into the mountains with Garina.

Villich: (AC: 6/varies, MV: 24, HD 2-12, THACO: varies, #AT: 2, Dmg: by non-metal weapon, SA: psionics, MR: 10%, ML: 14, AL: LN, SZ: M (7') PSP: 52-169, Score: 15, psionic powers: varies according to hit die, see Dark Sun Compendium)

Concluding the Adventure

Once the party delivers Hope their contract, though voided with her father's death, is complete. DM should advise against returning to Draj, or even staying there for the sorcerer-king will have put out a contract on their heads as traitors and murderers of templars. If they wish to return to the D'maka estate to collect their reward, they will find the remainder of the family has packed up and left Draj for places unknown. However the estate, now empty, is under the watchful eyes of the templars and could pose a problem if the party shows up there.

If the PC's had a favorable reaction from House Wavir in Encounter #2, they can travel to any major city and petition the house for some type of employment. Getting the party involved in the trading aspect of Athas may find them jobs such as caravan guards, house spellcasters, or as traders themselves.

Remember that if Polteck and/or Zal survive their ambush attempt, they PC's will have made terrible enemies that may not rest until they are dead. This could lead to several other adventures of the DM's creation.